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I Hear the Train A Comin' -- Center for Science Diplomacy

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I Hear the Train A Comin' — Center for Science Diplomacy

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The world is shrinking. This is a truism one often hears applied to the world of scholarly communication. But what institutions are arising to capitalize on and accelerate that constriction? One new body is the **Center for Science Diplomacy**, an arm of the **American Association for the Advancement of Science**. I recently spoke with its Director, **Vaughan Turekian**, about how science can build bridges across nations and ideologies, and what role academia can play in that process.

What is the Center for Science Diplomacy's mission?

The **Center for Science Diplomacy** aims to raise the profile of international science cooperation as a method for building relationships between and among countries and societies. A key element of this is bringing together scientists, the foreign policy and public policy communities to discuss what types of activities might help build bridges.

How did the Center come into being?

The **Center** is the product of numerous interactions that the **American Association for the Advancement of Science** has had with leading thinkers and practitioners from across the science and policy communities. Congressman **Brian Baird** (D-WA) has used a series of hearings to focus on the potential role that science cooperation might have in

US foreign policy. During a civil society panel in July 2008, **AAAS CEO Dr. Alan Leshner** officially launched the new **Center** to serve as nexus of the science and policy communities on these issues.

What is "science diplomacy," and what are some concrete examples?

Science diplomacy is the application of international science cooperation for the purpose of enhancing civil society and official international relations. It does so through actions that are designed to build technical capacity, advance science, and meet shared societal challenges such as climate change and public health. According to this definition, science diplomacy applies when the relationship is the goal, and science is the method (which differs from broader international scientific cooperation where advancing science is the goal and cooperation is the method). The use of science as an important element in a broader diplomatic relationship is not new; rather, it came to the fore during the cold war, when science engagement was used to build relationships with key members of other nation's intellectual leadership. In the early 1960's, for example, science cooperation became a critical element to engage Japan's elites at a time when the U.S. — Japan relationship faced some strains and growing pains. During their first meeting in 1961, Japanese **Prime Minister Ikeda** and U.S. **President Kennedy** committed to science cooperation between the two countries. The joint collaboration was meant to address the growing concern — outlined by **Edwin Reischauer** in his *Foreign Affairs* article, "The Broken Dialogue with Japan" — that the intellectual communities in both countries were drifting apart. Later in the cold war, science cooperation became a central element in establishing links and enhancing ties between important elements of U.S. and Soviet Society — particularly important given the dearth of other interactions, both official and unofficial. During his 1987 testimony to the **House Subcommittee on International Scientific Cooperation**, then-Assistant Secretary of State for **Oceans International Environment and Scientific Affairs John Negroponte** underscored the key reason for U.S.-Soviet scientific cooperation, stating "...we cannot forget that we are dealing with a closed society, and that these exchanges often give us the only access to significant circles in that society with whom we would otherwise have little or no contact. It would be short-sighted of us not to recognize that it is in our national interest to seek to expand scientific cooperation with the Soviet Union."

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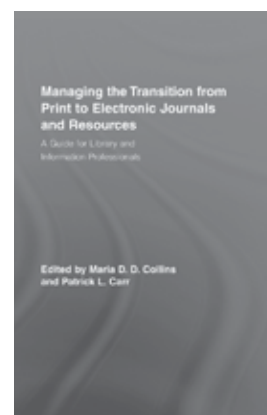
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there is an effort to build a national network of courier services for libraries to exchange materials.

There are also a number of institutions that are exploring direct-to-home delivery of items. Much like **Netflix**, some libraries are fulfilling requests and delivering the object to the user's mailbox. Certainly, there are costs associated with these services, but if people need or want to take advantage of them, why not provide the option? Much like other services, if the customers (in this case, library patrons) aren't being served in the way they want to be served, libraries face the risk that they will seek out another supplier.

In the end, the key goal of both publishers and libraries is getting the content to the readers and researchers who want it. We need to ensure they can find that content and we need to remove the barriers that exist in getting it. The barriers to discovery are rapidly diminishing. The barriers to delivering that content remain and desperately need to be overcome. 🌊

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What are the major barriers impeding international scientific collaboration?

Critical to any effort in international science cooperation is raising the profile of science as an important mechanism for interaction. The science community is obviously critical to engage as it provides the key human resources for such efforts. But successful science diplomacy also requires understanding by the policy community, which is critical for funding activities and for providing the visas necessary for cooperation with some countries. One of the major barriers to any cooperation is that there are not clear funds available for funding science that is based on relationship building. There are also limits to the ability for US agencies (particularly the **National Science Foundation**) to fund the participation of foreign scientists.



How is the Center for Science Diplomacy working to overcome these barriers?

By serving as a node for both the science and policy communities, the **Center** can attract some of the important thinkers and actors in international science cooperation to not only define the barriers, but to investigate possible approaches to overcoming them.

How can universities contribute to a better infrastructure of international scientific collaboration?

Universities are, in many ways, the bench from which the science cooperation community

is derived. We look forward to working with universities to identify where and how science cooperation might help build stronger civil society links with certain countries and societies. In addition, we look forward to engaging with international relations departments in universities to discuss how the study of science cooperation might be better integrated into their curricula. There is a long history of university involvement in diplomacy that provides a framework for future efforts. First, universities provide a gathering place, bringing together some of the best talent from around the world and hosting them in the United States. This is particularly true

in the sciences. These students bring back to their home countries the experiences they have had and the connections they have made in America. Universities are also expanding abroad, engaging people in their home countries. As universities are able to train and educate more and more scientists and engineers around the world, they further develop a broad community that can better engage with each other, both building relationships and critically, solving many of the shared global challenges, such as those related to health, sustainability and innovation.

How can scholarly publishers and information companies contribute to a better infrastructure of international scientific collaboration?



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There are numerous areas where scholars can help. Critically there are lessons learned from science cooperation, not only in cases involving the US but also in studying collaborations between and among other countries. Also, there is a lot of information needed about mechanisms and histories of science cooperation. For example, are there lessons learned from the ways that space cooperation might help maintain dialogues even when official relations between countries are strained? Academia can help identify productive patterns and models. Ultimately diplomacy is about connections, connections between societies, between people and between organizations. Information companies are well placed to help build those links and connections. In terms of science collaborations, we are at a point in human connectivity where collaborators separated by oceans, can share data, form ideas, and develop publications, at the speed of light and without leaving their own countries. This network of international researchers goes a long way in building relationships between societies and people from around the world, almost independent of any strains that might exist in the official relationships. 🌱

Rumors

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And stay tuned to see what **Helen Ivy** <ivyh@cofc.edu> has done with some old shelving. Talk about resourceful! We will have an interview in an upcoming issue of **ATG**!

Have you seen **Library Trends** (v.57#1, Summer 2008)? Title is **Digital Books and the Impact on Libraries**, and the issue editor is **Peter Brantley** (Executive Director, **Digital Library Federation (DLF)**). It's a must-read. Table of contents with abstracts is at muse.jhu.edu/journals/library_trends/toc/lib.57.1.html.

And just read this information about **Basch Subscription Services**. **Markus Library at Rockefeller University** is training for the **BOSS (Basch Online Subscription Services)**! Way to go, **Buzzy!** Congratulations!

workshops.rockefeller.edu/?boss

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